

2. INDIVIDUAL TYPHOONS

KIT

The season's first typhoon developed from a disturbance generated by an upper tropospheric low in the mid-Pacific trough in the eastern Carolines. The disturbance moved west-northwest for the next four days with a surface circulation becoming apparent on 4 January in the western Carolines. The depression passed just south of Yap and Ulithi on the evening of the 4th with Ulithi reporting 35-kt winds for a short period and surface pressure of 1001 mb.

On the 6th, reconnaissance aircraft located Tropical Storm Kit with 50-kt winds and a central pressure of 992 mb. For a 14-hour period, from the night of the 6th to mid-day on the 7th, Kit deepened 44 mb (3.1 mb/hr) to an unseasonably low 933 mb and winds of 120 kt (Figure 4-2).

January typhoons are unusual. Since 1945 only seven other tropical cyclones reached typhoon intensity, the latest being Phyllis in 1969.

As Kit moved toward the central Philippines, she turned to the west-southwest as heights began to build to the north over eastern China. Subsequent to moving over Leyte Gulf, Kit decelerated and weakened,

crossing the mountainous terrain of the Visayan Island group on the 8th. Kit further weakened to tropical storm strength by the time she reached Panay Island on the morning of the 9th. As westerlies eroded the ridge over eastern China, Kit drifted north. During the next several days, Kit followed an unusual track, dissipating back over the Philippine Sea.

In her wake, Kit left a death toll at 204 persons and property damage of approximately 23 million dollars (U.S.). Torrential rains caused rampaging floodwaters which washed away bridges, devastated crops, and heavily damaged property. Newspapers indicate floodwaters of up to nine feet occurred in the towns of Abuyog and Baybay on Leyte.

Kit, being an unexpected event for January, played havoc with shipping. Early on the 7th a British vessel, HALCYON DAYS, passed through the eye, experiencing winds of force 11 and recording a minimum pressure of 964 mb. A tug, the USS SIOUX, pulling a large tow, was caught in the southern part of the eye that night. She encountered estimated winds in excess of 75 kt and recorded a minimum pressure of 952 mb.

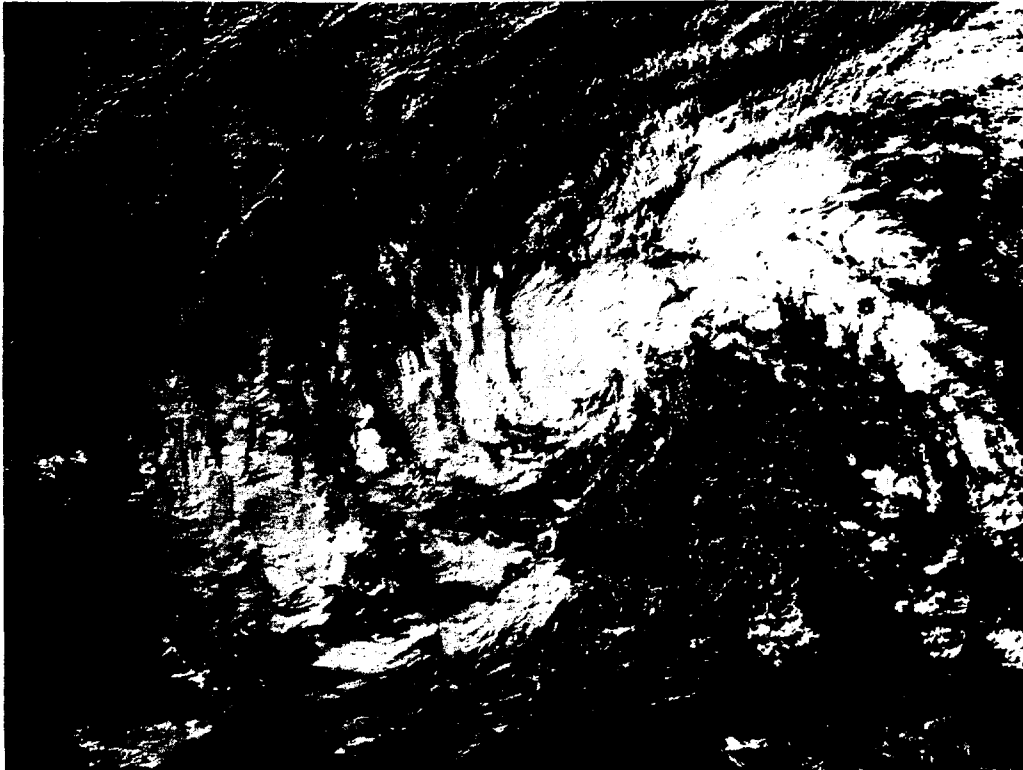


FIGURE 4-2. Typhoon Kit near peak intensity 200 nm east of the Leyte Gulf, 6 January 1972, 2324 GMT (DAPP data).